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THE IVORY DISC

BY

PERCY JAMES BREBNER

Author of

"A Gallant Lady" "The Turbulent Duchess"

"The Little Grey Shoe" Etc.

NEW YORK

DUFFIELD AND COMPANY

1920

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THE IVORY DISC

CHAPTER I

He was of those strong men who, whether they do right or wrong, do it without fear.

I

As HE came out of the Star and Garter Hospital at Richmond, Bruce Oliver filled his lungs with the fresh air of early morning. It was good to be alive, good to have free use of every limb, good to close the door on all the suffering, all the terrible disabilities which these walls enclosed.

"I feel like a walk, Williams," he said to his chauffeur who had been dozing, "meet me on the other side of the Park—at Robin Hood gate."

"Yes, sir."

As the car slid smoothly away, Oliver consulted his note book.

"Ockenden to lunch with me; to-night the 'Lion's Den,'" and he smiled. "I wonder how Lady Dealtry manages it in war time. It might be amusing, if I go, which is doubtful. Being considered eccentric has advantages, you are graciously pardoned for all sorts of social crimes."

He glanced back at the walls behind him, as if the depression of the place still had hold of him, then entered the

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Park and struck across the grass in the direction of Penn Ponds.

Dr. Bruce Oliver was nearer forty than thirty, yet he was still considered among the young men, chiefly because he occupied no definitely recognized niche in his profession. Many medical men, trying to square their own conservatism with modern progress, called him an enthusiast with absurd ideas and theories, something of a heretic. They would have welcomed him with open arms had he been nearer the commonplace. It could not be denied that he had had a brilliant career as a student, and that since then he had devoted himself to the study of the brain and nervous system, writing much upon the subject, but the conclusions he had arrived at were pronounced more revolutionary than valuable. One opponent had gone as far as to call them the distorted dreams of an ill-balanced mind. Criticism did not trouble Bruce Oliver. He was a rich man. He could afford to spend his time in study and experiment, leaving his consulting practice to look after itself. He was not very interested in normal cases, and many of his patients had only come to him as a last resource, when all other treatments had failed them. That he had successfully performed operations which no other man would attempt had prejudiced a large section of the profession against him. This prejudice had been strengthened by the lay press which on several occasions had discussed his work in a sensational manner, speaking of him as a man who cared nothing for human life so long as science was served. There was little sentimentality about Dr. Oliver, and as a body he detested the anti-vivisectionists, but there was nothing brutal in his nature, and he was an enemy to all suffering, human or otherwise.

For a time he had been at one of the base hospitals in France. He told nothing of his experiences, it was diffi-

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